

**City of Aberdeen Council Meeting
May 19, 2014**

Present: Mayor Bennett, Councilwoman Elliott, Councilwoman Landbeck,
Councilman Garner and Councilwoman Young

Absent: None

Also Present: Douglas Miller, City Manager
Phyllis Grover, Director of Planning and Community Development
Henry Trabert, Chief of Police
Opiribo Jack, Director of Finance
Doris Manner, Recording Secretary

Mayor Bennett called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Chief Trabert introduced a new police canine, 2-year old Belgian Malinois named, Arco, an explosion detection and tracking dog. The prayer was led by Pastor Melvin Taylor, Word of Faith Outreach Ministries and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilwoman Young.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Young and seconded by Councilwoman Landbeck and Councilwoman Elliott to approve the following minutes:

Council Retreat, March 14 and 15, 2014
Council Meeting, April 28, 2014
Business Meeting/ Work Session, May 5, 2014
Business Meeting/Work Session, May 12, 2014

The minutes were approved by a vote of 5 – yes.

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Aberdeen Lions Club Earth Day Contribution

Mr. Mark Schlottman of the Aberdeen Lions Club presented a \$500 contribution to the City of Aberdeen to use toward the efforts of the Harford County Earth Day Committee.

2. State of the City Address, 2013-2014 by Mayor Michael E. Bennett

Good evening. The past twelve months have been eventful and challenging for the City of Aberdeen. Let me tell you about what I am proud of and what our city has accomplished over the past year.

The Council and I are committed to have what we do for our citizens fully transparent. We realized that the old ways of getting information to our citizens and engaging our citizens were simply not effective or comprehensive. So, we have taken very deliberate steps to address that. Some of you are watching this meeting via a tape delay on Harford Cable

Network. We had been televising Council Meetings, but we took the additional step of televising our Work Sessions. We figured that this was a bold step as many ideas that we float in those Work Sessions are raw, but we thought it might be helpful for our citizens to see how these ideas are further refined into the actions that we take and the laws that we pass. We knew that our old web page was outdated and was sometimes difficult to navigate. Under the leadership of Felicia Bledsoe, we completely redesigned that page. We trust that the new page is easier to navigate and more helpful to our citizens. Your city government is now on Facebook with over 3,800 friends. This has proven to be a wonderful tool for getting the word out, especially when we had the multiple snow events this past winter. We have begun to use Survey Monkey as a tool to get public opinion on various issues. This came in handy when we revised our regulations on the storage of boats and RVs. And, we continue to produce a newsletter for delivery city-wide every other month. Our hope is to reach old and young alike; the wired and the un-wired.

I think all of you will agree that this winter was not typical for Maryland and caused us all an increased level of difficulty. I first want to thank our Public Works Department and Police Department for all that they did during the multiple snow and ice events. Many nights, while we were sleeping, they were plowing, salting and patrolling the city. One casualty of the extreme winter was that many of our aging roadways suffered damage. In the current fiscal year we have appropriated over \$3 million to resurface many of our streets. This effort won't pave all that needs to be done, but it will allow us to catch up on paving that had to be put off due to the fact that a significant source of State shared revenue that we use for such efforts was all but cut off several years ago. You should be seeing a great deal of paving activity over the next several months and we ask for your patience as we get this work done.

One real joy for me over the past year was that I served as chairman of the Legislative Committee for the Maryland Municipal League. This great group of municipal officials from all over the State reviews legislation that may impact municipalities and takes positions on that legislation. The meetings are always informative and lively. We also develop priority issues of our own and try to convince our elected officials in Annapolis of their importance. Our key issue for the last several years is to have highway user Revenues (the State shared revenue that we use for paving streets) restored to previous levels. I am happy and proud to say that we did get a significant restoration (not total, about half) of that funding source and here in Aberdeen we will be able to use that money to pave even more roads.

Another big legislative success in Annapolis is one that this and other Councils have advocated for over a long period of time. Certain friends of Aberdeen and Harford County were able to finally get authority for our county to levy a hotel tax. Hotel taxes are usual and customary and I could never understand why we in Harford County were denied this revenue source and ultimately had to put more burden on our own taxpayers. Now, much has to be done with the new County Council coming in and the new County Executive to implement

the hotel tax; but if it is structured as we have advocated in the past, I will be able to reduce the next budget's tax rate by \$.02 and also have a steady stream of income to maintain Ripken Stadium as a first class sporting and entertainment venue and remain the number one tourist attraction in Harford County. I do want to thank Dr. Rose Mary Hatem Bonsack for all that she did behind the scenes to make passage of this measure happen. Without her we would be saying, "maybe next year." She went out of her way to get this done for us.

Now, to the budget. I have spent many hours boiling this budget down to a point that it is workable. But I am proud to say that the tax rate will stay the same as will the water and sewer rates. This was not an easy budget to balance as our revenues are flat and the demands on the expenditure side are increasing. But we took on the philosophy that we were going to take care of our employees and maintain our current levels of service. We did this at the expense of our yearly vehicle and equipment replacement. We are also trying to maintain those conservative fiscal practices that have earned us a AA bond rating.

I want to take a moment to recognize a fantastic employee that we lost last month to a heart attack. Paul Visser was our water and wastewater superintendent and had been with the city ever since he graduated from high school. Last fall we gave him his 40-year tenure award at an employee function at Ripken Stadium. Paul was a great boss, a wonderful friend, and one of the best water and wastewater minds in the State. Under his leadership, our water and wastewater operations were 100% compliant with Federal and State regulations. Paul will be sorely missed.

In March of this year, we had a two-day Council planning retreat in which the majority of our City Council attended. This was an intensive and tremendous exercise from which we developed a vision statement for the city and set out our goals for the next couple years and for the next decade. We will roll this vision out in July and set the tone for our future.

I believe that Aberdeen is a great place to live, work, and play. And, I also believe that we have a bright future and even greater days in front of us. I believe that with our transit oriented development project we have the plans and means to remake our downtown and Rt. 40 corridor. All we have to do is fill-in the blanks of funding, partners, and timelines, and be committed to the plan even if we don't see completion in our time. I would like to take a moment to thank the quarter back of this effort, Phyllis Grover, our Director of Planning and Community Development. She was, indeed, our quarterback and worked with a number of State agencies as we went through the planning, process, getting grants and making it all happen. Phyllis, thank you very much.

My goal has always been to make Aberdeen a better place. Aberdeen might give me a hundred reasons to cry but daily it shows me a thousand reasons to smile.

Speaking for the Council and myself, there is no better place to live than in Aberdeen, Maryland and we are honored to serve as your Mayor and Council members. As I close, let's look into our city and the future, I would like you to remember that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. Let us take a step together. Thank you and God bless our city and our nation.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Mayor welcomed Boy Scout Troop #802 to the meeting.

1. Ordinance No. 14-O-11, Budget FY 2014-2015

Public Comment:

- a) Mr. Bob Hartman, Paradise Road: Mr. Hartman asked about acquiring defibrillators for the Boys & Girls Club and Aberdeen Swimming Pool.
- b) Mr. Tim Wills, Executive Director, Boys & Girls Club, East Bel Air Avenue: Informed everyone that a defibrillator was installed last week at Aberdeen Swim Center.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Mr. Frank Turner, Chesapeake Court, Aberdeen: Mr. Turner asked the Council to empathize regarding the ownership of chickens in Aberdeen.
2. Mr. Tim Wills, Executive Director, Boys & Girls Club, East Bel Air Avenue: Mr. Wills announced the Aberdeen Swim Club activities, programs, camps and the reopening on Memorial Day weekend. He also reported construction work on the Vi Ripken Field was underway with a ribbon cutting scheduled on August 11, 2014. The roof has been completed on the Aberdeen building.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

1. Ord. No 14-O-07, Transit Oriented Development (TOD) District Sectional Map Amendment (For Adoption)

Ms. Grover reported that this was the last phase for the TOD area within the one half mile of the train station. The zoning map was being amended for T-4, T-5, T-6 and 5-D for the special district. There were no questions from the Council.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Landbeck and seconded by Councilwoman Young to approve Ordinance No. 14-O-07, Transit Oriented Development District Sectional Map Amendment.

The motion was passed with a vote of 5 – yes.

2. Ordinance No. 14-O-12, Amendments to Heritage Trust, Chapter 61 (For Introduction)

Mayor Bennett introduced Ordinance No. 14-O-12, Amendments to Heritage Trust, Chapter 61.

3. Ordinance No. 14-O-13, Amendment to the 2011 Comprehensive Plan (For Introduction)

Mayor Bennett introduced Ordinance No. 14-O-13, Amendment to the 2011 Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Grover explained that the Planning Commission recommended amending the Comprehensive Plan by adding the parcel at 1 Swan Creek as requested by the owner of the business owner at 249 East Bel Air Avenue.

BUSINESS OF THE CITY:

1. Unfinished Business - None

2. New Business – None

3. Business from the Director of Planning and Community Development

Ms. Grover said that the Planning Commission Meeting will be held on May 28, 2014 to review the preliminary site plan of Normandy Woods.

4. Business from the Chief of Police

Chief Trabert reported that the Police Department expects to be nationally accredited in December, 2014.

5. Business from the Director of Finance

Mr. Jack presented a report on the proposed FY 2014 budgets amendments to the General and Capital Projects Funds that needed to be amended.

The **General Fund** budget was being increased by a total of **\$290,227** for the following:

Description	Amount	Comment
1. Energy audit and improvements to City Hall	\$ 91,839	Funded with State Grant
2. Winter operations	70,000	Funded with Fund Balance
3. Contribution to Volunteer Fire Dept. for an ambulance	100,000	Funded with Fund Balance
4. IT security upgrades	19,600	Funded with Fund Balance
5. Transfers to Capital Projects Fund for:		
a) Replacement of broken computers in Finance Dept.	3,880	Funded with Fund Balance
b) Additional costs for Franklin Street properties	<u>4,908</u>	Funded with Fund Balance
Total	<u>\$290,227</u>	

The **Capital Projects Fund** budget was being increased by a total of **\$267,407** for the following:

Description	Amount	Comment
1. Replacement of broken computers in Finance Dept.	\$ 3,880	Funded with Transfer from General Fund
2. Additional Costs for Franklin Street Properties	4,908	Funded with Transfer from General Fund
3. Transit Oriented Development projects (Acquisition of real properties)	200,000	Funded with State Grant
4. Sidewalk improvements (Mt. Royal Avenue)	40,000	Funded with Harford County Grant
5. Demolition and clearance of Franklin Street properties	139,295	Funded with Harford County Grant
6. Transfer to Sewer Fund for various sewer improvement projects in the BRAC zone	<u>(120,676)</u>	Funded with State Grant
Total	<u>\$267,407</u>	

A motion was made by Councilman Garner and seconded by Councilwoman Young to approve the following budget amendments: increase the General Fund budget by a total of **\$290,227** and to increase the Capital Projects Fund budget by a total of **\$267,407**.

The motion was passed with a vote of 5 – yes.

Mr. Jack reported on the year-to-date financial activities of the City, July 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014, comparing revenues and expenses to budgeted amounts for the various funds.

General Fund

Total revenues (including appropriated fund balance) exceeded total expenses (including transfers-out) by \$1.5 million, with revenues of \$14.9 million, and expenses of \$13.4 million. Revenues were \$356 thousand better than budgeted. Property tax collection was more than budgeted by \$320 thousand. State shared revenues were \$79 thousand less than budgeted; and county shared revenues were in line with budget. Expenses were better than budgeted by \$325 thousand. This was mostly due to: 1) savings from property insurance premium, and 2) less than budgeted cash outlays, so far, in line items such as tipping fee, IT, sidewalk repairs and contingencies.

Capital Projects Fund

Total receipts exceeded total expenses by \$2.7 million, with receipts of \$4.3 million (including transfer-in of \$4.2 million from General Fund), and expenses of \$1.6 million. Total receipts were less than budgeted by \$261 thousand. This was mostly because of delay in the implementation of grant projects, which in turn delayed our ability to draw down on grant funds. Expenses were better than budgeted by \$2 million. This was primarily due to delay in street resurfacing.

Water Fund

Total revenues exceeded total expenses by \$561 thousand, with revenues of \$2.4 million and expenses of \$1.8 million. Revenues and expenses were better than budgeted by \$361 thousand and \$411 thousand respectively.

Sewer Fund

Total expenses exceeded total revenues by \$1.2 million, with expenses of \$4.2 million and revenues of \$3 million. Revenues were less than budgeted by \$1 million. This was mostly due to grant proceeds that were pending. Expenses were less than budgeted by \$514 thousand.

Stadium Fund

Total receipts exceeded total expenses by \$401 thousand, with receipts of \$501 thousand (including transfer-in of \$241 thousand from General Fund), and expenses of \$100 thousand. Revenues and expenses were approximately in line with budget.

All Funds

Overall, the City's total revenues and other sources exceeded total expenses and other uses by \$4 million, with revenues and other sources of \$25 million and expenses and other uses of \$21 million.

6. Business from the Director of Public Works (DPW) – Mr. Lapinsky was not in attendance.
7. Business from the City Manager

Mr. Miller thanked the Lions Club for their contribution. Another budget amendment may be necessary for repairs at Ripken Stadium and equipment replacement. The Aberdeen Swim Club pool may require further repairs due to age.

BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL:

1. Business from the City Council

Councilwoman Elliott reminded the public that grass should not be mowed into the street to prevent the clogging of storm water drains.

Councilwoman Landbeck corrected The Record newspaper article on statements she made at a Council Work Session. The Record misquoted her saying chickens were to be the demise of Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), but in reality she asked that APG be contacted for their input on the matter.

Councilwoman Young remarked that the Council's job was to also to factor in public health and safety when considering allowing the ownership of chickens.

Councilman Garner would like the State to be contacted to mow the high grass in the median and lot areas on Rt. 22 where the homes were removed.

2. Business from the Mayor

The Mayor alerted the public to a change to the 9/11 Memorial Dedication and the 125th Fire Department Anniversary date. Instead of June 21, the events would be held on Saturday, June 28, 2014 at 11:00 a.m. in Festival Park.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Next Council Meeting:	Monday, June 2, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.
Next Business Meeting/Work Sessions:	Monday, June 16, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.
Next Planning Commission Meeting:	Wednesday, June 11, 2014, 7:00 p.m.
9/11 Memorial Dedication & 125 th Fire Department Anniversary, Festival Park on	Saturday, June 28, 2014, 11:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by Councilman Garner and seconded by Councilwoman Young to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.